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UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000311

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA POLITICAL ROUNDUP MARCH 20, 2004

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PROSECUTION ON ARMS DEAL CONTINUES, SLOWLY

11. (SBU) THERE HAS BEEN SLIGHT PROGRESS IN THE CASE OF FORMER SLOVAK NATIONALIST PARTY DEPUTY VITAZOSLAV MORIC AND A COLLEAGUE, WHO ATTEMPTED TO SELL A SOPHISTICATED RADAR SYSTEM TO NORTH KOREA IN 1998. INTERIOR MINISTRY SPOKESMAN BORIS AZALTOVIC TOLD MEDIA THE INVESTIGATION IS FINISHED AND THE MINISTRY HAS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PROSECUTOR BRING CHARGES AGAINST THE TWO. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO WATCH FOR A PROSECUTION ON THIS CASE, WHICH HAS MOVED SLOWLY THROUGH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. PROSECUTION OF ARMS DEALS REMAINS THE BIGGEST STUMBLING BLOCK IN SLOVAKIA'S EXPORT CONTROL REGIME.

EXPERTS PREDICT LOW TURNOUT FOR REFERENDUM

12. (SBU) RECENT OPINION POLLS SUGGEST THAT TURNOUT COULD BE AS HIGH AS OVER HALF TO TWO-THIRDS OF THE ELECTORATE FOR THE TRADE UNION AND SMER-SUPPORTED REFERENDUM TO CALL FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. ANALYSTS CLOSE TO THE EMBASSY SUGGEST BASED ON PAST ELECTIONS THAT PEOPLE FREQUENTLY SAY THEY WILL VOTE, THEN DON'T. VIRTUALLY ALL EXPERTS PREDICT THE REFERENDUM WILL NOT ATTRACT THE MAJORITY OF VOTERS REQUIRED FOR IT TO BE VALID.

ANTI-CORRUPTION SUCCESS STORIES

13. (U) THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION SCORED SOME MAJOR SUCCESSES THIS MONTH. HZDS MPS MILAN REHAK AND IGOR PINKAVA WERE CHARGED WITH FRAUD IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS BY DIVERTING OVER SKK 41 MILLION (\$1.26 MILLION) FROM THE NATIONAL PROPERTY FUND. BUT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAS NOT ONLY GONE AFTER OPPOSITION OFFICIALS. THE DEPUTY MAYOR OF KOSICE, SDKU NOMINEE EUGEN CUNO, AND A LOCAL LAWYER WERE CAUGHT RED-HANDED ACCEPTING A SKK 1 MILLION (\$30,581) BRIBE TO CHOOSE A CERTAIN CONTRACTOR TO BUILD MUNICIPAL HOUSING. BOTH WERE CHARGED WITH CORRUPTION. MEANWHILE, PETER PUSKAR, WHO RAN ON A COALITION TICKET FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS IN BRATISLAVA, WAS ACCUSED OF BEING THE HEAD OF A GANG THAT FUNNELED SKK 230 MILLION (OVER \$7 MILLION) FROM THE STATE TREASURY THROUGH FICTITIOUS BUSINESS SALES.

INTERIOR MINISTRY ON ROMA, EXTREMISM, AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

14. (SBU) PAVOL DRAXLER, ADVISOR ON EXTREMISM TO INTERIOR MINISTER VLADIMIR PALKO, TOLD POLOFFS THAT FOLLOWING ROMA UNREST IN THE EAST, HE WENT ON A MONITORING TRIP TO TREBISOV WITH OFFICIALS FROM EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND NGOS. IN HIS OPINION, THE POLICE ACTED FAIRLY WHEN THEY BROKE UP THE UNLAWFUL DEMONSTRATION IN THE SQUARE. THERE WERE COMPLAINTS ABOUT POLICE SURROUNDING THE ROMA SETTLEMENT AND ROUSING RESIDENTS OUT OF BED WITH GUNS, BUT DRAXLER SAID THIS WAS NECESSARY TO PROTECT PERSONAL PROPERTY AND CITIZENS. THE POLICE WILL BE REMOVED AFTER THE NEXT WELFARE PAYMENTS ONCE IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO ADDITIONAL VIOLENCE. HE SAID MUCH OF THE PROBLEM CAN BE BLAMED ON USURERS, WHO HAVE A BROAD NETWORK IN THE MAJOR TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. CERTAIN STORES WITH CONNECTIONS TO THE USURERS WERE UNTOUCHED BY THE EVENTS. THE CASE OF A ROMA MAN FOUND DEAD AFTER BEING REPORTED MISSING FOR TWO WEEKS WAS SHOWN TO BE A DROWNING, DRAXLER SAID. HE STATED THAT THE MAN WAS NEVER UNDER POLICE CUSTODY AND RAN AWAY FROM THE SETTLEMENT WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVED. THE MAN WAS A KNOWN DRUG USER AND WAS ON PROBATION. HE PROBABLY TRIPPED AND FELL IN THE RIVER AND POSSIBLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE WAS UNABLE TO GET OUT. PEOPLE AGAINST RACISM WILL LIKELY BE ABLE TO VIEW THE CORONER'S REPORT.

15. (SBU) POLOFF ASKED ABOUT THE ZAHORSKA VES CASE, WHERE ROMA ACTIVISTS ACCUSED THE MAYOR OF PURCHASING LAND WHERE ROMA LIVE AND FORCING THEM OUT OF TOWN. DRAXLER SAID THE CASE IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION.

16. (SBU) THE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO EXTREMISM, WHICH IS DEFINED BY THE MOI AS HATE CRIMES, SKINHEAD ACTIVITY, ET AL. AS PART OF THE MOI RESTRUCTURING, THERE IS A RESPONSIBLE OFFICER IN EACH DISTRICT TO MONITOR EXTREMISM. COOPERATION WITH NGOS CONTINUES, ESPECIALLY WITH PEOPLE AGAINST RACISM AND SARLOTA PUFFLEROVA'S CITIZENS AND DEMOCRACY.

17. (SBU) DRAXLER SAID AFTER SEVERAL POLICEMEN WERE FIRED DUE TO ALCOHOL PROBLEMS, THERE IS A NEW CULTURE OF NOT ABUSING ALCOHOL FORMING IN THE POLICE RANKS. POLICE DO NOT EVEN DRINK THE DAY BEFORE WORK FROM FEAR OF BREATHALYZERS.

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